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MILITARY ACTIVITIES AND ARRANGEMENTS BY COLONIAL POWERS IN TERRITORIES UNDER THEIR ADMINISTRATION WHICH MIGHT BE IMPEDING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE DECLARATION ON THE GRANTING OF INDEPENDENCE TO COLONIAL COUNTRIES AND PEOPLES

UNITED STATES VIRGIN ISLANDS

Working paper prepared by the Secretariat

1. Basic information on political, economic and social conditions in the United States Virgin Islands is contained in the general working paper prepared for the current session of the Special Committee (A/AC.109/1109). Supplementary information on military activities and arrangements in the Territory is set out below. 1/

2. In 1967, the Government of the United States of America transferred possession of its former naval base on St. Thomas (an area of 80 hectares) to the territorial Government, but retained the right to reoccupy the facility. At present, the United States Navy maintains a radar and sonar calibration station on St. Croix and an underwater tracking station off its west coast. The United States Coast Guard maintains a detachment on St. Thomas. The United States Virgin Islands National Guard, which is affiliated with the United States Army, also has its headquarters on St. Thomas. In addition, a permanent recruitment station for the United States armed forces is based on St. Thomas and a recruitment centre for the United States Marine Corps was established on St. Croix in April 1988.

United States Navy

3. It will be recalled that in February 1991, the territorial Government entered into an agreement with the United States Navy for the latter's use of a facility on St. John for the testing of non-hazardous equipment (see A/AC.109/1066, para. 3). According to press reports later in the same year, the United States Navy planned to spend approximately US$ 9 million on two projects on St. Croix: reconstruction of the Range Operations Center at St. George Hill, which would cost $6.5 million; and work on the Soonobuoy Quality Assurance Laboratory at Hams Bluff, which would total approximately $2.3 million. Both facilities had been destroyed by hurricane Hugo in 1989. It was also reported that the Navy had plans to install a new radar system on Crown Mountain on St. Thomas. The Multiple Object Tracking Radar system, on loan to the Navy for six months by the United States Army missile testing site in New Mexico, would be used to monitor training exercises in the Caribbean. 2/

4. The Territory continued to be a port of call for United States naval vessels and those of its allies. Approximately 49,000 sailors visited the Territory in 1990 and 42,000 in the first nine months of 1991. 3/

United States Coast Guard

5. The United States Coast Guard continued to maintain a detachment on St. Thomas and to patrol the waters of the Territory including, under a special arrangement, those of the neighbouring British Virgin Islands.

Virgin Islands National Guard

6. It was reported in December 1991 that the United States Congress had approved legislation introduced by Mr. Ron de Lugo, the Territory's delegate to Congress, which would allow the Governor to appoint the Commander of the National Guard. According to the local press, the legislation, which had been well received in the Territory, was considered to be long overdue and a necessary step towards self-government. 4/ It will be recalled that in the early part of 1990 the Governor had expressed his displeasure over the circumstances surrounding the appointment of the head of the Virgin Islands National Guard by the President of the United States. The Governor had noted with concern that the Territory was one of only two jurisdictions where the appointment of the head of the National Guard had been made by the President of the United States, and not by the Governor (for further details, see A/AC.109/1030, paras. 8-13).

United States Army

7. As reported in the working paper on the Territory, the United States Army Corps of Engineers was expected to investigate whether chemical and conventional weapons stored on Water Island in 1942 were still on that island (see A/AC.109/1109, para. 41).

Other developments

8. According to a local newspaper, the National Aeronautics and Space Administration (NASA) and the United States Air Force conducted a joint experiment in the Territory in July and August 1991. The newspaper reported that NASA and the Air Force were interested in studying the Earth's magnetic field and the effects of atmospheric radiation on electronic systems and satellites. 5/

Notes

1/ The information contained in the present paper is derived from published reports.

2/ The Daily News (United States Virgin Islands), 8 August and 21 September 1991.

3/ Ibid., 16 September 1991.

4/ Ibid., 7 December 1991.

5/ Ibid., 3 September 1991.